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Profile of Class of 2011 Shows Promise

Winthrop University

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ROCK HILL, S.C. - The Class of 2011 graduated May 7 from Winthrop and departed with many hopes and dreams. Here are some of their stories.

College of Arts and Sciences

A stint at the San Francisco General Hospital in Nayarit, Mexico, confirmed for premed student **Cipriano Ayala** that he was on the right career track. The biology major spent his time helping a general surgeon at the rural hospital, assisting in 23 surgeries and administering/removing sutures, among other tasks.

Ayala, who's been accepted to the Medical University of South Carolina and hopes to become a board-certified physician, said the work taught him something valuable: "how to put the needs of a patient before anything else."

This summer, biology graduate **Kevin Ryan** will strike out for Costa Rica, where he worked with Peter Phillips, professor of biology, to complete his undergraduate research on water quality in the country's biological corridor. He will work as a water quality intern at the University of Georgia's study abroad campus and assist with conservation efforts. Though Ryan does plan to attend graduate school, right now he said he is "happy to be helping with conservation efforts in a tropical watershed."

Kathleen Brown, a mass communication major, finished Winthrop in three years. She will begin work full time as a producer for Fox News in Charlotte, writing scripts and lining up nightly shows after having worked there part time since the fall. She gained experience with coverage of two of the Charlotte area's biggest cases, including a Chesterfield County dog shooting and a child murder. She also interned at WYFF in Greenville and was an anchor on Winthrop Close-Up, a member of the Video Production Club and a photographer at The Johnsonian.

Biology major **James Tucker** has enrolled in Wake Forest University's Ph.D. program for Molecular and Cellular Biosciences, where he wants to focus on cancer biology and immunology. His ultimate goal is to work for a university or health institute as a researcher in either field. Tucker noted that it was his undergraduate research that helped him "refine my future area of study."

From parachutes to boiling flasks: Chemistry major **Laura Augustine's** road to Winthrop wasn't a traditional one. Augustine joined the military in September 2001, serving first as a parachute rigger and later a jumpmaster who led airborne operations. Forced to take general chemistry, she discovered a love for the subject. Soon Augustine will begin a full-time position with Pulcra Chemicals, headquartered in Rock Hill, as a chemist in the company's research and development lab.

Amanda Benavides came to Winthrop as a political science major, but she'll be leaving with a degree in chemistry. Her work with Aaron Hartel, associate professor of chemistry, in his organic research lab inspired an unexpected passion for chemistry. Benavides is one of five chemistry graduates who have been accepted into the University of North Carolina-Greensboro's Ph.D. in Medicinal Biochemistry Program.

Mass communication major **Anna Douglas**, award-winning former editor of The Johnsonian, will head to Australia for a year of traveling and work. Douglas fell in love with the country during her study abroad at Deakins University, and she will keep a blog, [American Sees Oz](#), during her travels across the Outback. “My time at Winthrop – working at The Johnsonian, being a part of DSU, studying abroad – gave me the confidence to take the leap,” she said.

Elizabeth Jenkins, a sociology major, is embracing a future without firm plans. Jenkins, who won the 2011 American Legion Award, plans to join the Peace Corps after graduation and dedicate herself full time to service. Community service, in fact, has been a hallmark of Jenkins’ time at Winthrop – she worked as a Resident Assistant, studied in Costa Rica and took a research trip to Nicaragua and completed an internship with the Boys and Girls Club of York County.

Amy Rivers earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and will continue at Winthrop to earn a master’s degree in biology. The Caskey Award winner plans to pursue a Ph.D. in neuroscience. She loved everything about Winthrop, especially the faculty. “They are incredible and are not only professors but also mentors and friends. I know I would not have gotten this far without the constant support, help, gentle advice and love from my faculty.”

College of Business Administration

Digital information design major **Joel Bowen**, just 19, plans to continue his work as lead web designer for the Geek Squad Academy with consumer electronics retailer Best Buy. Now responsible for all web development for the Geek Squad Academy brand, Bowen is training to become a project coordinator. He credits his professors with pushing him “to take active roles in leadership even as I learned” – a lesson that will serve him well in his career.

Carrie Greene always loved the Internet, so Winthrop’s Digital Information Design program seemed a perfect fit. She chose the web application design track. Greene was one of 28 Winthrop and York Technical College students to work at The Hive, a pilot project created by marketing firm RevenFlo to get students creating projects for real clients. She has accepted a position as an IT coordinator at Williams & Fudge in downtown Rock Hill.

Graduation is bittersweet for **ChrisJohn Smith**, as it marks the end of her time at Winthrop as a student and a staff member. Smith, administrative specialist for the College of Business Administration, earned a degree in economics through Winthrop’s Employee Education Assistance Program. She will leave Winthrop to work in financial planning at Prudential, and she will take the Certified Financial Planner exam at the end of the year.

Business administration major **Vy Tran** will continue pursuing a career in healthcare management as a student in George Washington University’s Master of Health Services Administration program. Involvement with Winthrop’s campus ministry RUF taught Tran how to be part of a community and a professional organization. This lesson will prove useful to Tran, whose passion is creating “innovative solutions to improving population health.”

Richard W. Riley College of Education

Alison Howe, an early childhood major from Great Falls, S.C., took classes for nine years to earn her degree. She gave up her job as a teaching assistant at Great Falls Elementary School in order to fulfill the last requirements of her degree, particularly the internship. She is excited to enter education and is looking for a job to teach from kindergarten to third grade.

The Winthrop experience for **Corina Ellison** meant outstanding faculty support. “I feel like I am prepared well for the classroom.” The special education major spent her last few months at an internship at Crowder’s Creek Elementary and will return to her hometown of Columbia, S.C.

Physical education major **Nathan Evers** wants to teach physical education on the middle or high school level, as well as coach soccer or basketball. His educational training was very diverse, he said, which was invaluable. He has applications for teaching jobs in several cities across the Carolinas.

College of Visual and Performing Arts

For interior design major **Mical Romano**, graduation signals a time to return home to Maryland, where she will search for interior design positions in the Baltimore, Md., and Washington, D.C., metro areas. Over the summer, the Mildred Sullivan Award winner will study to become a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design: Green Associate (LEED GA).

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